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## **CGA Public Health Committee**

**PUBLIC HEARING Monday, March 7, 2016**

### **In Opposition of:**

**SB-300: AAC NEW BRITAIN WATER COMPANY LAND**

Submitted by Carolyn Bayne, Natural Resources Director, LWVCT

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**The League of Women Voters of Connecticut is a non-partisan statewide organization comprised of 1600 members in 27 local chapters who are committed to effective public policy and the active participation of citizens in their government.**

The League supports state policies and programs which promote comprehensive long-range planning for the conservation and development of land and water resources, including enforcement of regulations to maintain and improve water quality. Connecticut's 3.6 million residents enjoy some of the best drinking water in the country, and that is largely due to the state's long-standing, strict protection of drinking water lands.

The League therefore **opposes Senate Bill 300**, which would allow the City of New Britain to change the use of its water company-owned lands to permit a lease of up to forty years that would allow gravel mining on more than 130 acres of Class I and II lands.

This bill is in direct violation of the law from which it seeks an exemption. Because they are located closest to the water supply sources, and because land use and water quality have been deemed inextricably linked, Class I and II water company lands (private or public) are protected and preserved in order to safeguard the state's water resources. These high-priority, environmentally sensitive lands are typically kept as open space with only limited activity permitted, such as passive recreation.

The deleterious effects of gravel and rock mining in such a sensitive area, and its resultant impact on nearby drinking water, cannot be understated. The destruction of the natural landscape and removal of vegetative cover reduce soil retention; ground and surface water levels are lowered; and there is increased, potentially contaminated, runoff into surface supplies.

Another major threat posed by passage of this bill is the dangerous precedent that it would set for the more than 120,000 acres of water utility lands throughout the state. If one municipal water company is allowed an exemption for such commercial activity, other water companies will likely request similar exemptions, especially since there are companies looking to expand their operations and municipalities hoping to benefit from the revenues derived from such arrangements. Given that a comprehensive statewide water plan is currently under development, no single exemption affecting water company lands should be granted until it can be considered in the context of the entire state.

Senate Bill 300 threatens the protections on Connecticut's drinking water lands and adversely affects the high quality of water its residents have come to expect and enjoy. **Please vote NO on Senate Bill 300.**

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut appreciates the opportunity to offer our comments.